

REMARKS

The present invention relates to a porous fiber comprising a hydrophobic solvent-soluble polymer and an organic compound having a plurality of hydroxyl groups, having defined characteristics in terms of average fiber diameter, void percentage, and the number-average molecular weight of the organic compound.

In the Office Action dated February 13, 2008, the Examiner maintained the sole rejection of claims 1 - 10 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Hobbs (U.S. 2002/0192449 A1). More particularly, in response to Applicant's arguments that the polyethylene glycol of Hobbs et al can not be equated to Applicant's required organic compound having a plurality of hydroxyl groups, the Examiner noted (see page 3) that claim 1 only required "an organic compound having a plurality of hydroxyl groups", and that claim 1 did not require a certain molecular weight, such that the Examiner considered the polyethylene glycol of Hobbs to satisfy the requirements of claim 1 for purposes of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

In the present Amendment, Applicant has herein further amended claim 1 to incorporate claim 5 therein; accordingly, claim 5 has been cancelled. Analogously, independent claim 6 has been amended to incorporate claim 9, and accordingly claim 9 has been cancelled. More particularly, independent claims 1 and 6 further differentiate over the Hobbs reference by requiring that the number-average molecular weight of the organic compound having a plurality of hydroxyl groups is not less than 62 nor more than 300. Applicant therefore respectfully submits that independent claims 1 and 6, and the remaining claims dependent thereon, now more clearly distinguish over the Hobbs reference. As Applicant pointed out in the previous Response

(see page 3 thereof), the number-average molecular weight characteristic of the organic compound in accordance with the present invention is important, and it is not a trivial change to modify the number-average molecular weight, since it can affect the characteristics. In this regard, it is again noted that polyethylene glycol having a molecular weight of 400 or 600 could not be successfully used to practice the present invention (see Co-Example 2 and Co-Example 3, respectively, at page 18 of the present specification).

It is respectfully submitted that independent claims 1 and 6 as amended herein, as well as remaining dependent claims 2 - 4, 7 - 8, and 10, distinguish over and are patentable over the Hobbs reference.

In view of the above, entry of this Amendment, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1 - 4 and 6 - 8, and 10 of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby earnestly solicited. Also, it is respectfully requested that method claims 11 - 13 be rejoined.

If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the local Washington, D.C. telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.


Respectfully submitted,

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